

# *The Reformation*

## STATING THE ISSUE

On October 31, 1517, Martin Luther, a professor of theology at the University of Wittenberg in Germany, posted ninety-five theses, or propositions, criticizing Church practices. Luther meant only to invite other theologians to debate the points he had raised. Yet, without meaning to, he had challenged the authority of the Church. He soon found himself at the center of a revolt, called the Reformation, that divided western Christendom. Within a quarter of a century, the Reformation destroyed the religious monopoly of the Roman Catholic Church in the West.

## CHAPTER

## 4

Why did the Reformation take place? For centuries Christians had complained about a number of Church practices. They had charged that Church officials were corrupt or that Church doctrines could not be supported in the Bible. European rulers had long opposed the secular power which popes and bishops had won because they controlled land. Yet the attempts of reformers to change the Church had frequently failed in the past.

Beginning students of history often look for a single major cause for developments such as the Reformation. They look for one new ingredient to explain the change, such as the influence of a man like Martin Luther. Historians use the term single causation to describe explanations of this kind. These explanations occur frequently when people praise or blame a single powerful individual, such as a President, for a major change in society.

Chapter 4 examines the Protestant Reformation that took place during the early part of the sixteenth century. The first three readings focus on the causes of the Reformation. They raise the issue of whether a single event or several related events were responsible for this major change in the religious life of the West. The last reading in the chapter summarizes the argument about causation and traces the development of the Protestant revolt.

Pope Innocent III brings papacy to its greatest power.

Popes reside in Avignon during Babylonian Captivity.

John Wycliffe attacks Church doctrines and abuses.

During Great Schism, popes in Avignon and Rome vie for power.

Council of Constance condemns John Huss, and he is burned for heresy.

Desiderius Erasmus writes *The Praise of Folly*.

Martin Luther publicizes Ninety-Five Theses attacking indulgences.

Luther repudiates divine authority of Church.

Pope excommunicates Luther.

Luther opposes peasant uprising of 1524.

English Act of Supremacy makes king head of Church of England.

John Calvin publishes *Institutes of the Christian Religion*.

Council of Trent clarifies Catholic doctrines and censures Church abuses.

Henry IV of France signs Edict of Nantes protecting French Protestants.

Thirty Years' War between German Protestants and Catholics soon

involves most of Europe.

## 18 CRITIQUES OF THE MEDIEVAL CHURCH

The medieval Church believed that salvation was given to man by the grace of God, and that the Church alone had the keys to that grace. These keys were the seven sacraments: baptism, confirmation, penance, the Eucharist, marriage, extreme unction, and holy orders. The sacraments had to be administered by the clergy. This power over the souls of people gave the Church great authority in medieval Europe.

The Church did not limit this authority to its religious role. Throughout the Middle Ages, it was actively involved in non-religious affairs. By the early thirteenth century, the Church was the single largest landholder in Europe, and the pope, Innocent III, was the most powerful man of his time. The popes ruled a vast area, collecting taxes and waging war with their feudal vassals. Their calls for Crusades sent Christian rulers and many of their subjects to fight the Muslims in the Holy Land.

Many of the clergy became so involved in worldly pursuits that they ignored their religious vows. Some were self-seeking men who had

bought their religious offices. Sometimes they held several at a time. Churchmen began to try to reform the Church and its practices. John Wycliffe, a fourteenth-century churchman and Oxford professor, believed that the Church had no right to own property. According to Wycliffe, the true Church was made up of ordinary people who found the means to salvation by reading the Bible. His views influenced the priest and scholar, John Huss of Bohemia. (See map, p. 112.) Huss challenged the pope openly, calling Christ the only head of the Church. He attacked Church beliefs and spoke out against its rituals and worldly wealth. Both men were condemned as heretics, people who denied the truth of Church beliefs. But Wycliffe was finally permitted to retire to private life while Huss was burned at the stake in 1415.

By the sixteenth century more voices were raised against abuses in the Church. Most notable among them were Martin Luther and Desiderius Erasmus. Erasmus was a Catholic priest in Rotterdam and a leader of the humanist movement in northern Europe. The selections in Reading 18 are excerpts from each of their protests. As you read, keep the following questions in mind:

1. What religious practices did Erasmus ridicule? What did he reveal about medieval Christians and the Church?
2. What was Luther protesting in his Ninety-Five Theses? What reasons did he give?

## Erasmus: *The Praise of Folly*

*Erasmus was the most famous scholar of his day and a great admirer of the Greek and Roman civilizations. Alarmed by conditions within the Church, Erasmus prepared his own Greek and Latin translations of the New Testament by going back to the original texts. He hoped to remove the errors made in earlier translations and force the Church to reexamine some of its beliefs. In The Praise of Folly, Erasmus used his sharp wit to ridicule some of the religious practices of sixteenth-century Europeans.*

To the class of fools who listens to ghost stories and tales of miracles belong those people who believe in the silly but pleasing notion that if they look at a picture of St. Christopher, they will not die that day. This group also includes those who believe that if they offer a greeting to an image of St. Barbara they will return safely from battle. These fools have found a new Hercules in St. George. They seem to adore

Desiderius Erasmus, *The Praise of Folly*, as quoted in James Harvey Robinson, *Readings in European History* (Boston: Ginn and Co., 1906), Vol. II, pp. 41-44. Language simplified.

According to Church doctrine, people whose sins had been forgiven at confession had to spend time in purgatory before going to heaven when they died. The Church began to pardon some sins when people donated large sums of money. This practice was called indulgence.

► Among the "follies" Erasmus criticized was superstition. What do you think of superstition? Does it influence you in any way?

even his horse, which is decked out in gorgeous trappings. They make additional offerings in the hope of gaining new favors. One would think that his bronze helmet was half divine, the way people swear by it.

And what should I say about those who delude themselves with the comfort that comes from imaginary pardons for their sins when they pay for indulgences? They have taken to measuring their time in purgatory by years, months, days, and hours, calculating how much they subtract from their time there with each payment. There are plenty of those who rely on certain little magical certificates and prayers to win riches, honor, future happiness, health, perpetual prosperity, long life, a lusty old age—even, in the end, a seat at the right hand of Christ in heaven. But they are not anxious for the end to come. They will content themselves with the joy of heaven only after they must finally surrender the pleasures of this world, to which they so lovingly cling.

The trader, the soldier, and the judge think that they can clean up the sins of a lifetime by donating a single ill-gotten coin. They flatter themselves into believing that all sorts of dishonesty, drunkenness, quarrels, bloodshed, evil, and treason can be taken care of with a contract in which they pay a particular price to obtain salvation.

These various forms of foolishness are so worked into the lives of Christians that even the priests in the Church do not object to them. In fact, they foster these beliefs because they are smart enough to realize what tidy little sums of money come to them because of these follies.

As for the theologians, perhaps the less said the better, since they become quite irritable unless they can force you to give up those beliefs that you worked out through honest reason and scholarship. And if you do not give them up, they brand you as a heretic, for it is their custom to use all manner of thunderings to terrify those whom they dislike.

## Luther: The Ninety-Five Theses

*In 1517 Johann Tetzel, a Dominican friar, was authorized by the pope to distribute indulgences in the German principality of Saxony. Half the money he received was to go to Rome to help build St. Peter's Church. The other half was to go to the German prince of Saxony who owed great sums to the papacy and to a private banking house. Tetzel reportedly encouraged sales by proclaiming, "When the coin in the coffer rings, the soul from purgatory springs." To Luther, who had long agonized over the means to his own salvation, indulgences corrupted the very meaning of Christianity. His Ninety-Five Theses attacked the sale of indulgences, although the Church denied selling them.*

*It insisted that it only granted them. A selection of Luther's theses appears below.*

1. When our Lord and Master Jesus Christ said "Repent ye," he intended that the whole life of believers ought to be one of penance.
2. This kind of penance is not the same as sacramental penance in which the believer performs the ritual of confessing and atoning for his sins under the ministry of a priest.
3. At the same time, penance does not mean only an inner feeling of regret. This feeling of regret must also make the believer want to perform certain acts to atone for having done wrong.
5. The pope does not have the power to remove a man's obligation to pay a penalty for committing a sin except for those penalties which the pope himself has imposed.
21. The preachers of indulgences, who say that buying a certificate of indulgence from the pope or his representative frees a man from all punishment, are wrong.
27. Those who preach that the soul flies out of purgatory as soon as the money rattles in the chest preach man's values, not God's.
28. It is certain that when the money rattles in the chest, greed and gain may be increased, but the forgiveness of sins can come from God alone.
43. Christians should be taught that he who gives to a poor man or lends to a needy man does better than if he used the money to buy an indulgence.
44. By works of charity, a man's charitable nature increases, but in buying an indulgence the man does not become better—only freer of punishment from the Church.
50. Christians should be taught that if the pope knew of the money his indulgences have taken from poor people, he would prefer that St. Peter's Church be burned to ashes rather than have it built with the flesh, bones, and skin of his people.
86. Why does not the pope, who has enormous riches, build St. Peter's with his own money rather than the money of poor believers?
91. If those who preach the sale of indulgences in Germany would preach them in the spirit that I believe the pope intended them to be preached, all of these questions would be answered with ease. In fact, they would not even be asked.

Martin Luther, *Ninety-Five Theses*, as quoted in Robinson, *Readings in European History*, Vol. II, pp. 58-61. Language simplified.

► Should people build elaborate and expensive churches, or should they build simple ones and use the savings for charity or some other worthy purpose?

### FOR THOUGHT:

Suppose someone told you that Martin Luther caused the Reformation. How would you respond?



*These three pictures show Martin Luther in different lights. How does each artist portray Luther? How can you explain the similarities and differences in these portrayals?*





## 19 THE APPEAL OF THE PROTESTANT REVOLT

Only a hundred years before Luther, John Huss had made similar charges against the Church. Huss was burned at the stake, but Luther died of natural causes. Huss did not destroy the religious unity of Europe, but Luther divided it into Protestant and Catholic camps. What had happened during those hundred years to make Luther successful where Huss had failed?

Part of the explanation can be found in the weakening of Church authority. Late in the thirteenth century, kings and princes began to resist papal interference in their political and economic activities. Some rulers were able to gain control of the Church in their territories. At the same time, the clergy was growing increasingly worldly and fond of luxury. Many Europeans began to question their Church. They became less willing to recognize its divine right to dictate their moral values.

However, some of Luther's success resulted from the popularity of his ideas and those of other Protestant reformers. The landowning nobility, for example, resented the Church's vast holdings within their territories. And the reformers had all attacked the right of the Church to own property. Some had gone so far as to say that the Church should be under the control of the state. Thus, the nobility saw the possibility of taking the Church's land if the Church were successfully challenged. The middle class wanted freedom from the restrictions the Church put upon their commercial interests. And the peasants, oppressed by taxes and debts, wanted the chance for dignity that Luther, himself a peasant, seemed to offer. These groups defended the reformers and assured their success. From the evidence in Reading 19, you should be able to develop some hypotheses about the appeal of Protestantism in the sixteenth century. Keep the following questions in mind as you examine the evidence in the readings.

1. For what reasons did Luther appeal to the German nobles? How did his ideas reflect recent political changes in Europe?
2. What were the major complaints of the peasants? Why were they attracted to Protestant ideas?
3. To what class would Calvin's ideas most appeal? On what do you base your answer?



# Luther's Address to the German Nobility

*Luther's protest against indulgences became a protest against the Church. When Luther defended his views publicly in 1519, he stated that the laws of the Church were not necessarily God's laws. The Bible alone contained the proper guides for Christians. In 1520 Luther published three pamphlets, including his Address to the German Nobility. In 1521 he was excommunicated.*

It is not out of mere arrogance and stubbornness that I, one poor and insignificant man, have decided to appeal to your lordships. The distress and misery which oppress all the ranks of Christendom, especially in Germany, have made not only me but everybody cry aloud for help.

Those who support the authority of the pope have built three "walls" of belief to protect the Church from reform. In the first place, when kings and princes have asked them to reform, they have stated that the secular rulers have no power over the spiritual rulers—that, on the contrary, the spiritual power is above the secular rulers. Secondly, when some have used the Holy Scriptures to call for reform, they said "No one but the pope can interpret the Scriptures." And thirdly, when a council of the Church has called for reform, they invented the idea that no one but the pope can call a council.

Let us, then, attack the first wall.

The defenders of the Church maintain that the pope, bishops, priests, and monks should be called "the spiritual class," while princes, lords, artisans, and peasants make up the "temporal class." Then they affirm that spiritual authorities are superior to temporal authorities. But do not be afraid of this claim. All Christians are truly members of the spiritual class, and there is no difference between us, except for the office we hold. As St. Paul says, in Corinthians I, Chapter 12, we are all one body in Christ. Each of us has a particular task to perform as the various parts of the body perform particular functions.

Therefore, a priest should be nothing in Christendom but a man with a particular function. We see, then, that all those we call churchmen, be they priests, bishops, or popes, are not different from or higher than other Christians, except insofar as they have the responsibility and the honor of preaching the word of God and giving man the sacraments.

Now let us look at the doctrine that states the temporal authorities have no power over the spiritual. That is like saying that the hand shall do nothing to help the eye, despite the fact that it is severely injured. I say that since God has given the temporal power the responsibility

Luther, Address to the German Nobility, as quoted in Robinson, Readings in European History, Vol. II, pp. 74-77, 79-80. Language simplified.

Many reformers believed that councils of churchmen and representatives of the European rulers could best rid the Church of abuses. Several such councils were held during the first half of the fifteenth century. The councils and the papacy were in conflict, since each insisted on its superiority.

The College of Cardinals, established in 1059, elects the pope.

to punish the wicked and protect the good, we must let it perform its task regardless of whether or not it must punish popes, bishops, priests, monks, nuns, or whatever.

What is the use of those who are called "cardinals"? I will tell you. In Italy and Germany there are many rich convents, endowments, and tracts of land belonging to the Church. The best way of getting these into the hands of the pope in Rome is to create cardinals and give them these rich holdings. That is why Italy is almost a desert now: The convents are destroyed, the Church lands consumed, the revenues of all the churches drawn to Rome. Why? Because the cardinals must have all the wealth.

Now that Italy is sucked dry, they come to Germany. We shall soon see Germany in the same state as Italy. Now this devilish state of things is not only open robbery and deceit, but it is destroying the very life and soul of Christianity. Therefore, we must use all of our diligence to ward off this destruction. Let us begin with the pope and cardinals—we cannot find worse ones. If we rightly hang thieves and behead robbers, why do we leave the greed of Rome unpunished? Rome is the greatest thief and robber that has ever appeared on earth or ever will; and all in the holy name of the Church.

## The Declaration of the Peasants

*The peasants of sixteenth-century Germany, though in many cases no longer serfs, were still heavily taxed and deprived of their common pastures and woods. When a peasants' war broke out in Germany in 1524, the peasants drew up a declaration of grievances. Excerpts from that declaration follow.*

The Declaration of the Peasants, as quoted in Robinson, *Readings in European History*, Vol. II, pp. 95-98. Language simplified.

In medieval times, a tithe was a Church tax amounting to one-tenth of a person's income.

The peasants are referring to nobles, princes, and lords of the Church, such as bishops, who had serfs.

First, it is our humble desire that in the future we, the peasants, should have the power to choose and appoint the pastor of our own community, and that we should have the right to depose him if he should conduct himself improperly. The pastor we choose should teach us the gospel pure and simple, without adding any doctrine or ordinance made by man.

Second, as a just tithe is called for in both the Old and New Testaments, we are ready and willing to pay a fair tithe in grain. From this tithe will come the salary of the pastor which the community will establish. What remains should be given to care for the poor.

Third, it has been the custom until now for men to hold us as if we were their own property, which is pitiable enough since Christ has delivered and redeemed us all, lowly as well as great. Accordingly, it is consistent with the Scriptures that we should be free. Not that we



*From this picture, how would you describe the lives of the German peasants in Luther's time? What do you think these people might have wanted from the Protestant revolt?*

wish to be absolutely free under no authority. God teaches us that we should not lead a disorderly life. But He has not commanded us to obey the authorities except as we should obey the word of God; that is, we should be humble toward everyone, powerful or not. We are thus ready to obey our authorities in all things becoming to a Christian. But we take it for granted that you will release us from serfdom as true Christians, unless it can be shown in the gospel that we are serfs.

Our sixth complaint is in regard to the excessive services which are demanded of us and which are increased from day to day. We ask that

► Do you take for granted many of the rights the German peasants requested 450 years ago? Can you think of any dangers in taking such rights for granted?

this matter be properly looked into so that we shall not continue to be oppressed in this way.

Seventh, the lord should no longer try to force more services on the peasant than are provided for in the contract between peasant and lord, unless the lord will make an additional payment.

In the eighth place, we are greatly burdened by small holdings which cannot support the rent that is due from them. We ask that the lords fix a just rent, so that the peasant shall not work for nothing.

## Calvin: *Institutes of the Christian Religion*

*Calvin was a French theologian who had accepted many of Luther's teachings. When he openly denounced the Church and papal authority, he was threatened with persecution and so he fled to Switzerland. There, Calvin established a church-run state, a theocracy. The following excerpts from the Institutes of the Christian Religion present Calvin's views on economic practices.*

John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, John Allen, ed. (Philadelphia: Philip H. Nicklin & Hezekiah Howe, 1816). Vol. II, pp. 196-202. Language simplified.

The Scriptures teach us about how we should use our earthly blessings. There are two kinds of goods which God has given us. The first are those necessities we must have to live on earth before passing to our heavenly reward. Second, in addition to the goods we must have in order to live, we obtain goods which we use primarily for our own pleasure. Whether the goods we obtain are for necessities or for pleasure, we must use them in moderation. This the Lord teaches us in the Scriptures when He states that life on earth is like a pilgrimage. Christians travel through this life on their way to God's heavenly kingdom. If we are only passing through life on earth to eternal life in heaven, we ought to make use of earth's blessings to assist us in our journey.

We state the principle, then, that we ought to use God's earthly gifts, so long as we use them for the same purposes for which God created them. After all, He created them for our benefit and not for our injury. Moreover, He has provided these gifts for more than existence; He has created them for our pleasure and delight, as well.

Let us discard that inhuman philosophy which states that we should use God's gifts for only those things that are necessary in order to live. In the first place, this philosophy deprives us of the lawful enjoyment of the Divine gifts. Secondly, this philosophy turns man into a senseless block. We should, therefore, use goods for pleasure, but we must oppose extravagant use of these goods to satisfy the pleasures of the flesh.

► What would you include among "those things that are necessary in order to live"?

Lastly, the Lord commands everyone of us to take his work seriously. He has appointed each of us to particular duties, or callings. Every individual's occupation, therefore, is a post assigned to him by God. Hence, no work is so lowly that it is not important and respectable in the sight of God.

### FOR THOUGHT:

The three documents in Reading 19 all criticize practices of the Roman Catholic Church. Would you therefore conclude that Church abuses were the sole cause of the Reformation?

## 20 THE CHURCH REFORMED: PROTESTANT AND CATHOLIC

When Luther posted his Ninety-Five Theses in 1517, he had no thought of establishing a separate church. Rather he hoped only to force the Church to reform its doctrines concerning penance and indulgences. Luther had suffered grave anxiety over the destiny of his own soul. Searching in the New Testament for some guide to God's grace, Luther had found the words of St. Paul, "The just shall live by faith." (Romans Ch. 1:17) For Luther, thereafter faith alone provided the means to salvation. But this belief contradicted the Church teachings that salvation required faith in Jesus, participation in the sacraments, and the performance of good works.

Luther continued to challenge the Church's emphasis on good works and the sacraments. Luther claimed that the doctrine of indulgences made a farce of true repentance. Penance and other sacraments encouraged empty participation in religious ritual. Luther further argued that salvation was God's gift to man and that the only means of achieving it was by following the Scriptures and having faith in Jesus.

Luther was very much a man of his times. It was not unusual for a European of the late Middle Ages to be preoccupied with his soul and salvation. And people were questioning the morals, philosophies, and values of medieval Europe as well. When Church theology failed to answer these questions, many reformers left the church and developed Protestant theologies.

Some religious reformers, such as Erasmus, did not leave the Church. And by the mid-sixteenth century the Church had begun its own counterreformation. Paul III, the first reforming pope, revived the Church council movement begun in the previous century. The council he called

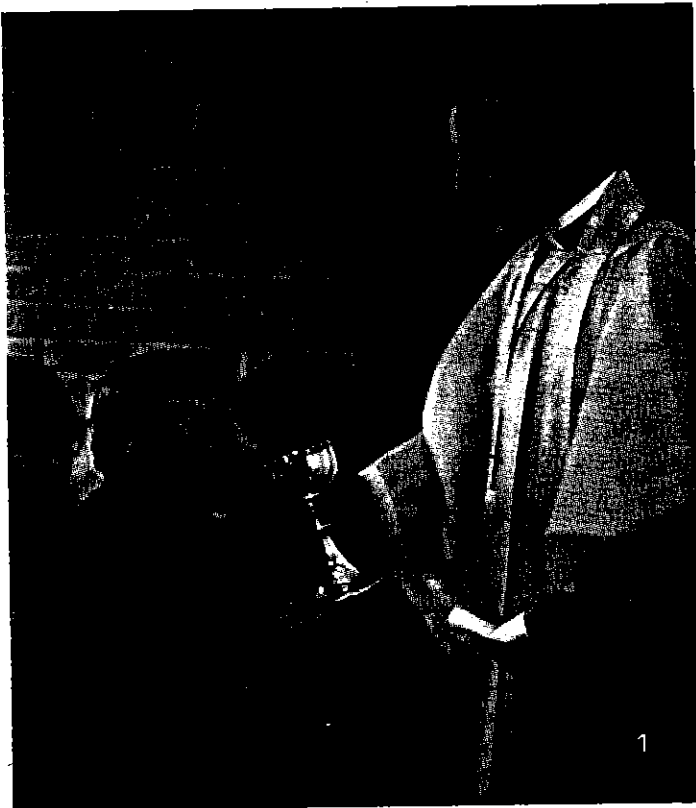
met in the northern Italian city of Trent periodically between 1545 and 1563 to reexamine and clarify Church beliefs. It reasserted the supreme position of the pope and took strong measures to end immoral practices among the clergy. The material in Reading 20 shows some of the charges leveled against the Church and how the Church responded. As you study the selections, consider the following questions:

1. What was Luther's interpretation of the Eucharist? How did it differ from that of the Council of Trent?
2. According to Luther, how is man saved? How did the Council of Trent respond to this belief?
3. How did the Council of Trent reform the Church? What did it not change?

## Luther: The Sacrament of the Eucharist

*The Catholic sacrament of the Eucharist, or the mass, celebrates the Last Supper of Jesus. Jesus had taken bread and wine and called them his body and blood. Then he had told his disciples to repeat*

*Lutherans receiving wine*



*Catholic priest drinking wine*





3

*The pictures on these two pages show two scenes from a Catholic mass and two parallel scenes from a Lutheran communion. What similarities and differences do you see? Why do you think the question of the proper type of Eucharist is no longer very controversial?*

*Lutherans  
receiving bread*



4

*Catholic child  
receiving bread*

*what he had done in remembrance of his death on the cross. Roman Catholic Church doctrine holds that Christians who take bread and wine during the mass renew Jesus' sacrifice for man's sins and receive God's mercy.*

*The medieval Church held to the doctrine of transubstantiation—the transformation of the bread and wine into the body and blood of Jesus. In the medieval mass, the priest repeated Jesus' words, offered only the bread to the congregation, and then drank the wine himself. Luther took issue with the Church's definition and administration of the Eucharist in *On the Babylonian Captivity of the Church*, one of the three pamphlets he wrote in 1520.*

Luther, *On the Babylonian Captivity of the Church*, as quoted in *Luther's Primary Works*, Henry Wace and C.A. Buchheim, eds. and trans. (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1896), pp. 302-313. Language simplified.

Matthew, Mark, and Luke agree that Christ gave both the bread and the wine to all of his disciples. No one has denied that Paul gave both to the early Christians. According to Matthew and Mark, Christ did not say concerning the bread, "Eat ye all of this," but did say concerning the cup, "Drink ye all of this." Each writer points out that the disciples drank the wine.

Priests who refuse to give both the bread and wine to members of their congregation commit a sin. The priests are at fault, not the laity [nonpriests]. The sacrament does not belong to the priests, but to all believers. The priests are not lords. They are servants whose duty it is to give both the bread and the wine to those who seek them.

We should interpret the Scriptures accurately. We should read God's words in their simplest meaning. In this case, the early fathers of the Church wrote that Christ took bread and blessed it. The Book of Acts and the Apostle Paul also call it bread. We must understand that the bread and wine of the mass are real bread and real wine. It is not necessary to believe that the bread and wine are transubstantiated by Divine power. This belief is mere opinion. The idea that the bread and wine are changed into the body and blood of Christ is not supported by Scripture or by reason.

## Luther: Justification by Faith Alone

*According to Luther, man could not earn his salvation; he could only receive it from God. God granted salvation to those who accepted the true meaning of the sacrifice of His son, Jesus. Luther spelled out this doctrine of "justification (salvation) by faith" in *A Treatise on Christian Liberty*, the third pamphlet he published in 1520.*



Man is composed of two elements, a spiritual element and a bodily element. The spiritual nature, which we call the soul, may be thought of as the inward man. The bodily nature, which we call the flesh, is the outward man. And, though our outward flesh may perish, the inward soul will have everlasting life if it is renewed in Jesus Christ.

So it will bring no profit to a man if his body is adorned with sacred vestments such as the priests wear, or live in sacred places like the monks, or hold sacred office like a bishop, or pray, fast, and abstain from certain foods. Any person whose inward soul has not been justified by faith in Christ could do any one of these things. On the other hand, the soul will not be injured if the outward body is clothed in ordinary dress, if it should live in ordinary places, or should eat and drink in an ordinary fashion.

One thing, and one thing alone, is necessary for justification of the soul and Christian liberty, and that is the most holy word of God, the Gospel of Christ. As He says: "I am the resurrection and the life; he that believeth in me shall not die, but live eternally." The soul can do without everything except the word of God, without which none of its wants are provided for. The Christian is free from doing good works to gain his salvation. He must strengthen his faith.

One who has faith in Christ believes that Christ had died for him. He believes that Christ intercedes with God for his salvation. Not only does Christ pray for us, but he teaches us through his spiritual presence in all of us. Praying for us and teaching us are supposedly the functions of an earthly priest. But since Christ has done these, everyone who believes in him is his own priest.

Here you will ask, "If all who are in the Church are priests, how are those whom we call priests different from the laymen?" I reply that an injustice has been done in giving special powers to a few, when according to the Scriptures they belong to all. Those who are now boastfully called popes, bishops, and priests are called ministers, servants, and stewards in the Bible, for they serve the rest of us by teaching us to have faith in Christ.

Although, as I have said, inward faith in Christ is enough for salvation, still the outward man, or the man of the flesh, lives a mortal life in which he comes into contact with other men. Here then, good works begin. The outward man will perform good works if faith and Christ's spirit have become part of the inward man, or the soul. When he follows the instructions of his inner self, he comes into conflict with the will of his flesh, which is to seek gratification. But the spirit of faith will not let the outward man do this. Using this principle of letting the inward faith dictate the actions of the outward man, every man can easily decide for himself how he ought to behave. But those who pretend to gain salvation by doing good works are only fooling themselves. Truly good works do not make a man good, but a good man will do good works.

Luther, A Treatise on Christian Liberty, as quoted in Luther's Primary Works, Wace and Buchheim, eds. and trans., pp. 31-37. Language simplified.

► Are you concerned about your spiritual life? What, if anything, has replaced the importance of religion in your life?

► Should people do good in the hopes of some reward either on earth or in an afterlife, or should they do good for its own sake?

# The Catholic Reformation: The Council of Trent

*Church authorities consider the Council of Trent the most important council in the modern history of the Roman Catholic Church. The following passages are taken from the council's decrees.*

The Canons and Decrees of  
the Council of Trent.  
Language simplified.

Let the following be cursed: anyone who says that the New Testament does not provide for a distinct priesthood; anyone who says that priests do not have the power of bringing about the transubstantiation of the bread and wine into the body and blood of Christ; anyone who preaches that priests do not have the power of forgiving or not forgiving; and anyone who says on the other hand that a priest is merely a minister whose only duty is to preach the gospel.

If anyone says that a man can be justified before God by doing good works without also having the divine grace of Jesus Christ, let him be cursed.

If anyone says that a sinner is justified by faith alone, meaning that it is not necessary for him to receive sacraments to prepare for grace, let him be cursed.

If anyone says that a man's justification before God is not increased by his good works, let him be cursed.

In order that Christians may receive the sacraments with greater devotion, this holy council commands that bishops and priests should first explain the purpose and use of the sacraments in a way that the congregation can understand, using the native tongue of the people if it is necessary.

It is to be desired that all who become bishops should understand what portion of their income should be devoted to their own maintenance, and to comprehend that they are called to the office of bishop not for riches or luxury, but to the labors and cares for the glory of God.

## FOR THOUGHT:

For which of the hypotheses that you developed at the beginning of this chapter have you been able to find supporting evidence? What do you think now about the issue of single causation vs. multiple causation?